

## RACIAL SCIENCE, RACIAL MEDICINE:

### THE IDEA OF "RACE" IN THE HISTORY OF THE BIOLOGICAL, MEDICAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES

*"The word 'race' is a vague formula to which nothing definite may be found to correspond. On the one hand, the original races can only be said to belong to paleontology, while the more limited groups, now called races, are nothing but peoples, or societies of peoples, brethren by civilization more than blood."*

A.H. Keane et al, *Man: Past and Present* 1920-1898, pp. 37-38.

Despite the certainty with which these authors made their pronouncements, "race" has remained not only a salient concept within a variety of disciplines, but also an enduring object of scientific investigation and controversy. One need only flip through the pages of recent issues of *Science* or *Nature* to find evidence of on going and heated debates among anthropologists, medical doctors, immunologists, geneticists, and even psychiatrists. The purpose of this course is to trace the origins of a "scientific" concept of race and to interrogate its transformations and uses over time. The primary sources assigned, ranging from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, will highlight the multiple, and often ambiguous, definitions of the term; they will also underscore the concept's correlation, at various points in history, to the idea of species, variety, tribe, linguistic group, nation, and civilization. What prompted individuals to root their theories in racial terms? How did different theorists contradict each other? Were their theories ever accurate or valid? How did racial ideas develop in different geographical regions?

Among other things, the course will:

- Explore the ways in which the idea of race has been used to discuss perceived human differences, whether in appearance (somatic/phenotypic), hereditary material (genetic/genotypic), or behavior and intellectual capacity (mind/psychology);
- Examine the extent to which past historical actors have described these differences as biological and fixed, environmental and mutable, or as some combination of the two;
- Analyze the epistemological and empirical grounds of various racial theories and typologies; and
- Consider the diverse applications and social consequences of racial theories.

Although research into the history of racial science has concentrated predominantly on Europe and North America, readings will also be assigned that consider Africa, Latin America, the Pacific, the Caribbean, and Asia. In this way, students will gain a sense of the global currency of "race" in science, particularly during the period 1860-1960. Regardless of students' geographical focus, the course should enable them to situate their research and ideas in a more international context.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

*Students are expected to participate actively and thoughtfully. Careful attention to the assignments is essential.*

#### WRITING, RESEARCH, AND DISCUSSION ASSIGNMENTS:

- 2 Short essays 4 to 5 pages each
- 3 Preliminary assignments for junior paper
- 1 Junior Paper draft due during final two weeks
- 2 Discussion sessions in pairs
- 1 Junior paper commentary on another student's JP draft

\* The essays may be turned in on Friday; all other assignments should be brought to class on Thurs.

**WEEK 1 - WHAT'S IN A NAME?**  
**COURSE INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH TOOLS**  
**11 SEPTEMBER**

**READING ASSIGNMENTS:**

\*Robert Bernasconi, "Who Invented the Concept of Race? Kant's Role in the Enlightenment Construction of Race," in R. Bernasconi, ed., *Race* London: Blackwell, 2001, pp. 11-36. 26

Oxford English Dictionary Definition of Race noun #2

UNESCO Statement on Race 1950 1952

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

- What is the significance of historical analysis; how is it done?
- How to distinguish between primary and secondary sources
- Categories of primary sources
- Tools for locating sources
- Course overview

**Discussion Questions:** 1 Why and how do the origins of concepts matter?  
 2 What can historical controversies and debates teach us?  
 3 If a term is used in an imprecise or ambiguous way, what are the consequences?

\* Readings marked with an asterisk are in the course packet

**PART 1 - CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS**

**WEEK 2 - THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND IDEAS OF RACE**  
**18 SEPTEMBER**

**READING ASSIGNMENTS:**

\*K.G. Davies, "Europe Overseas: Slavery, Commerce and Empire," in Alfred Cobban, ed., *The Eighteenth Century: Europe in the Age of Enlightenment* New York: McGraw Hill, 1969, pp. 152-180. 11

\*Robert Shackleton, "The Enlightenment: Free Inquiry and the World of Ideas," in Alfred Cobban, ed., *The Eighteenth Century* New York: McGraw Hill, 1969, pp. 260-278. 11

François Bernier, "A New Division of the Earth" in Bernasconi, ed. *The Idea of Race*, pp. 1-4.

François Marie Voltaire, "Of the Different Races of Men" in Bernasconi, *The Idea of Race*, pp. 4-7.

Immanuel Kant, "Of the Different Human Races" in Bernasconi, *The Idea of Race*, pp. 8-22.

Johann Gottfried von Herder, "Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Humankind" in Bernasconi, *The Idea of Race*, pp. 23-26.

Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, "On the Natural Variety of Mankind" in Bernasconi, *The Idea of Race*, pp. 27-37. 37

\*Carl von Linné Linnaeus, excerpt from *System of Nature*, in Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, ed., *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader* London: Blackwell Publishers, 1997, pp. 10-14. 5

\*Georges Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, selection from *A Natural History, General and Particular*, v. 1, translator W. Smellie 1860 orig 1748 1804, in Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, ed., *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader* London: Blackwell, 1997, pp. 15-28. 14

**Discussion Questions:** 1 What kinds of questions preoccupied these Enlightenment scholars?  
 2 What constitutes "racial science" in this period?  
 3 What do you think are the differences between "racial science" and "racism"?

**WEEK 3 – THE GREAT CHAIN OF BEING AND THE  
POLYGENISM/MONOGENISM DEBATE  
25 SEPTEMBER**

**READING ASSIGNMENTS:**

- \*H.F. Augstein, "Introduction" in Augstein, ed., *Race: the Origins of an Idea, 1760 1850* Bristol, 1996 . 25
- \*Nancy Stepan, "Race and the Return of the Great Chain of Being, 1800 1850," in Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800 1960* Oxford: Macmillan Press, 1982 , pp. 1 19. 19
- \*Henry Home Lord Kames "Preliminary Discourse, Concerning the Origin of Men and of Languages" in Augstein, ed., *Race: the Origins of an Idea*, pp. 10 23. 14
- G.W.F. Hegel, "Anthropology," in Bernasconi, *The Idea of Race*, pp. 38 44.
- Arthur de Gobineau, "The Inequality of Human Races," in Bernasconi, *The Idea of Race*, pp. 45 53. 16

**Discussion Questions:** 1 How do climate and environment or physical geography play a role in racial explanations in the period under review?  
 2 What is the difference between polygenism and monogenism? Does one position seem inherently more "progressive" than another? Was it historically?  
 3 Which author have you found most provocative so far in that you *strongly* agree or disagree with his views ? Can you say precisely why?

**NOTE:** The second half of this session will be held in Firestone Library where we will have a chance to explore databases and other reference tools that might help with historical research. We will also conduct a brief exercise in locating types of sources.

**ESSAY ASSIGNMENT #1:**

Drawing upon the primary and secondary source readings for the previous weeks, write a 4 5 page essay in which you explain the origins of race as a "scientific" concept and its heterogeneous meanings in this period. Imagine that you are writing an essay for an encyclopedia entry.

**WEEK 4 – EXPLAINING RACIAL DETERMINISM  
2 OCTOBER**

**READING ASSIGNMENTS:**

- \*Nancy Stepan, "Race is Everything': The Growth of Racial Determinism, 1830 1850," in Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science*, pp. 20 46. 27
- \*William Lawrence, "On the Causes of the Varieties of the Human Species," in Augstein, ed., *Race: the History of an Idea*, pp. 90 126. 37
- \*James Cowles Prichard, "On the Relations of Ethnology to Other Branches of Knowledge," in Augstein, *Race: the History of an Idea*, pp. 213 239.
- \*Robert Knox, "The Races of Men: A Philosophical Inquiry into the Influence of Race over the Destinies Of Nations," in Augstein, *Race: the History of an Idea*, pp. 240 260. 48

**Discussion Questions:** 1 What is racial determinism?  
 2 What kinds of historical explanations would you offer for its consolidation in the middle of the nineteenth century?

**JUNIOR PAPER ASSIGNMENT:**

Bring to class a brief discussion of your proposed junior paper topic no more than 2 pages . Remember to specify the following: the time period you would like to concentrate on ie 18<sup>th</sup> century, 1920s and '30s, etc ; the geographical region s that interest you; and the over arching themes that you expect to address. Also include a brief description of the kinds of primary sources you would like to use and give two or three examples that you have found on your own.

## WEEK 5 – EVOLUTION, EUGENICS, AND THE HUMAN SCIENCES

### 9 OCTOBER

**READING ASSIGNMENTS:**

- \*Nancy Stepan, "Evolution and Race," in Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science*, pp. 47 82. 36
- Charles Darwin, "On the Races of Man," in Bernasconi, *The Idea of Race*, pp. 54 78. 25
- \*Alfred Russel Wallace, "The Origin of the Human Races and the Antiquity of Man deduced from the theory of natural selection 1864 ," in Michael Biddis, ed., *Images of Race* Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979 , pp. 37 54. 18
- \*Francis Galton, "Hereditary Talent and Character 1865 ," in Biddis, ed., *Images of Race*, pp. 55 71. 17
- Francis Galton, "Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope and Aims" in Bernasconi, *The Idea of Race*, pp. 79 83. 5
- Franz Boas, "Instability of Human Types" in Bernasconi, *The Idea of Race*, 84 88. 5

- Discussion Questions:**
- 1 How did evolutionary theories change the nature of theories about race?
  - 2 What is the relationship between race and eugenics according to Galton ?
  - 3 Why would the "instability of human types" undermine racial determinism?

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT #2:**

How have concerns about inequality and inferiority been addressed in the early literature on race? What is the relationship between concerns about inferiority and concerns about differences biological, mental, etc ? Take at least two of the primary source authors we have discussed even those whose views with which you may strongly disagree and analyze their assumptions about and interests in the issues of inequality and inferiority.

## PART 2 - THEMATIC AND GEOGRAPHICAL EXPLORATIONS:

### 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

## WEEK 6 - SLAVERY, MIGRATION, AND RACE-MIXING -

### EUROPE, THE AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN

### 16 OCTOBER

**READING ASSIGNMENTS:**

- \*John Haller, "The Negro and the Southern Physician: A Study of Medical and Racial Attitudes 1800 1860," *Medical History*, v. 16 1972 , pp. 238 253. 16
- Richard Graham, ed., *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870 1940* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990 , Introduction, "Racial Ideas and Social Policy in Brazil, 1870 1940," "Race in Argentina and Cuba, 1880 1930: Theory, Policies, and Popular Reaction," pp. 1 69. 69
- \*Samuel Cartwright, "Report on the Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race," *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal* 1851 , pp. 691 715. 25
- Primary Source author: David Croly, *Miscegenation: the theory of the blending of the races, applied to the American white man and negro* New York: Dexter and Co, 1864 .

**JUNIOR PAPER ASSIGNMENT #2:**

Bring to class an initial bibliography of primary and secondary sources that you will use for your junior paper. If possible, begin to annotate each reference with a few sentences detailing the argument and/or importance of the piece. The point is not to produce a comprehensive bibliography, but to begin to discriminate among the kinds of texts/sources that will be of most use to you in constructing your argument.

**WEEK 7 - PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY, EUGENICS, AND MENTAL TESTING -  
SOUTH AFRICA  
23 OCTOBER**

**READING ASSIGNMENTS:**

Saul Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, Introduction, "Physical Anthropology and the Quest for the Missing Link," "Biological Determinism and the Development of Eugenics," and "Mental Testing and the Development of the Native Mind," pp. 1 65, pp. 120 165, and pp. 197 245.

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Primary Source author: Raymond Dart

**FALL BREAK  
25 OCTOBER TO 2 NOVEMBER**

**WEEK 8 - HEALTH, RACE, AND EMPIRE - AUSTRALIA AND THE PACIFIC  
6 NOVEMBER**

**READING ASSIGNMENTS:**

Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia* Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002, Introduction, "Antipodean Britons," "A Cultivated Society," "No Place for a White Man," "The Making of the Tropical White Man," "From Deserts the Prophets Come," pp. 1 126 and pp. 181 215.

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Primary Source author: Griffith Taylor

**WEEK 9 - NAZI SCIENCE AND MEDICINE - GERMANY  
13 NOVEMBER**

**READING ASSIGNMENTS:**

Robert Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988, Introduction, "The Origins of Racial Hygiene," "'Neutral Racism': the Case of Fritz Lenz," "Political Biology: Doctors in the Nazi Cause," "The Sterilization Law," and "The 'Organic Vision' of Nazi Racial Science," pp. 1 117 and pp.223 250.

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Primary sources: Materials from the Adolf Hitler collection in Firestone's Special Collections.

**JUNIOR PAPER ASSIGNMENT #3:**

Prepare a revised junior paper topic that includes a title and a 500 750 word abstract. The abstract should include the main questions your junior paper will consider as well as a preliminary hypothesis that you will test through your examination of the primary sources. What is it you are trying to explain? How do you think your interpretation of the evidence differs and/or complements the arguments made by other authors? Are there things you strongly disagree and/or agree with in the secondary literature that you would like to address in your junior paper? If you already have a sense of some of the preliminary arguments that you might like to make, be sure to include these.

**WEEK 10 - CASTE, RACE, AND TRIBE -  
SOUTH AND EAST ASIA  
20 NOVEMBER**

**READING ASSIGNMENTS:**

\*Frank Dikötter, "The Discourse of Race and the Medicalization of Public and Private Space in Modern China 1895 1949," *History of Science*, v. 29 1991, pp. 411 420.

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- \*Susan Bayly, "Caste and 'race' in the colonial ethnography of India," in Peter Robb, ed., *Concept of Race in South Asia* Dehli: Oxford University Press, 1995 , pp. 165 218. 54
- \*Crispin Bates, "Race, caste and tribe in Central India: the early origins of Indian anthropometry," in Robb, ed., *Concept of Race in South Asia*, pp. 219 259. 41

**THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY  
27 NOVEMBER**

**WEEK 11 -  
4 DECEMBER**

Circulation and critique of junior paper drafts.

Each student is expected to prepare a class presentation evaluating another student's draft and offering feedback on 1 the primary and secondary sources used, 2 the content and persuasiveness of the argument, and 3 the quality of the writing including both the paper structure and prose . Comments should be constructive and thoughtful.

Ideally, the comments you receive on your draft will not only help you improve your paper, but they should also aid you in becoming a better editor of your own work.

**WEEK 12 -  
11 DECEMBER**

Circulation and critique of junior paper drafts.

**JUNIOR PAPER DUE: 6 JANUARY**